



FAIRFAX COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Division of Environmental Health
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FLOOD CLEAN UP OF DAMAGED BUILDINGS

The interiors of flood-damaged dwellings are potentially hazardous. Items in these dwellings should be considered potentially contaminated with bacteria, viruses, molds and chemicals from the floodwaters.

Safety

After floods or sewage discharges inside and/or near inhabited structures, safety precautions, disinfection, and strict cleaning methods are required. During any interior flood or spill clean-up, care should be taken to eliminate the possibility of:

- Ingestion of pathogenic organisms via contaminated food or water, or contact with contaminated surfaces. Recommended personal protection: respiratory protection such as N-95 Mask, waterproof boots, puncture resistant gloves, long-sleeve shirt and pants, eye protection (goggles) and head cover. Wash hands thoroughly after working at flood sites, contact with floodwaters, or contact with contaminated items. Keep children away from flood areas and flooded buildings.
- Injury resulting from structural collapses. Enter flooded buildings with extreme caution and only with guidance or assistance of structural experts.
- Electrical shock resulting from exposed wiring, especially in wet conditions. Enter flooded buildings with extreme caution and only with guidance or assistance of electrical experts.

Clean-up can only be performed after all safety precautions are taken!

Clean-up

Flooding and/or spillage of sewage or contaminated waters must be contained or stopped. Absorption into soil, water, floors, walls, household items, and furnishings must be prevented as much as is possible. Using a pump, divert sewage/flood waters to an intact sewer line via sewer line clean-outs. If at all possible, do not divert sewage or flood waters into a storm sewer system. All surfaces can then be properly disinfected and cleaned. Interior cleaning should be performed in the following manner:

- Keep all windows open for ventilation.
- Dispose of standing water/sewage inside the structure.
- Discard of water damaged porous or spongy materials such as books, mattresses, box springs, upholstered furniture, ceiling, wall and flooring coverings including carpet, wet insulation, wooden kitchen utensils and cutting boards.
- Discard any food and beverage containers that have been in contact with flood waters.

- Wash down and disinfect all contaminated household items, solid wood furniture, appliances, other items with disinfecting solution of ¼ cup chlorine bleach to 1 gallon clean water. Allow contact of 5 minutes with solution.
- Soak cooking and eating utensils for 30 seconds in a 100 ppm (parts per million) solution of free chlorine. (This solution can be made by adding approximately 1 teaspoon unscented household bleach to 1 gallon of water).
- Wash down and disinfect all food contact surfaces with ample amounts of the above-mentioned chlorine disinfecting solution

- One teaspoon of baking soda to 1 quart of water can be used as a deodorizing solution.

Spreading lime (calcium oxide) will disinfect exterior soils and ground surfaces. Lime is available at most hardware stores and is caustic; therefore proper precautions should be taken while using it.

For more information, contact the Fairfax County Health Department at 703-246- 2300